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ABSTRACT

This report, the seventh in a series concerning school calendars, examines teacher attendance patterns. Pupil attendance falls off from the September high point to reach a low point in February, whereupon the trend is reversed through June. Outside temperature and student patterns are similar. A sample of New York State public school districts was chosen to represent the four major heating degree zones, and rural, suburban, and city community types. From an original sample of 38 districts, 14 supplied the necessary data. About 7,000 teachers are included in the survey. Generally speaking, the teacher attendance pattern does not resemble that of the students. Though both show a decrease for the first three months, the similarity is lost from then to year-end. Too, there is little similarity among the patterns of the degree zone and community type groups. Since teacher attendance seems to be so little related to time of year and to yearly temperature patterns, it would appear that school calendar changes would have little effect on teacher attendance. (Author/MLF)

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TEACHER ATTENDANCE PATTERNS

Technical Report No. 7

of

A Study of School Calendars
Conducted for the Board of Regents
of the State of New York

by

The Division of Research

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Albany, New York 12234
November 1978

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Balston Spa—Edward Sauter, Superintendent
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Delhi—Richard Zajack, Assistant Principal
East Irondequoit—Rodney Spring, Superintendent;
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Lee Demeter, Personnel Director
Mattituck—Roger Burns, District Principal
New York Mills—Robert Cleveland, Supervising Principal
Newburgh—Charles Disare, Superintendent;
Kenneth DeWitt, Assistant Superintendent
Pine Valley—Robert Wade, Superintendent
Potsdam—Carlos Gutierrez, Superintendent
Rochester—John Franco, Superintendent;
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South Colonie—Donald McDonald, Acting Superintendent
Utica—Edward Perry, Superintendent;
Peter Sabatino, Administrator for Education Testing and Research
Vestal—Raymond Husebo, Superintendent

Gerald H. Wohlferd, Project Operations Manager of the calendar study, coordinated the collection of the data, compiled the data and wrote the report. William Alwell and Philip Pillsworth, Division of Research staff members assigned to the calendar study, reviewed the draft of the technical report.

Carl E. Wedekind, Director
Division of Research

TEACHER ATTENDANCE PATTERNS IN NEW YORK STATE

Introduction

When a teacher is absent from a classroom, a substitute teacher is provided, so that student learning can continue uninterrupted. Yet, a substitute teacher, no matter how qualified, cannot carry on where the regular teacher left off. Time must be spent by the substitute teacher in learning what has previously been presented or discussed, discovering what subject areas to reemphasize, and finding the particular needs of each child. There is, therefore, a possibility that teacher absences can be disruptive to the steady scholastic progress of students. In like manner, the greater the frequency and number of teacher absences, the more opportunity for retardation of learning to occur. A high teacher attendance would seem desirable. Should teacher attendance patterns show a relationship to weather or length of time school has been in session, a change of calendar might increase attendance, and student achievement as well.

Under the present school calendar children and teachers are clustered together in classrooms from fall through spring with minor breaks at the New Year and Easter. The close proximity of humans is conducive to the spread of communicable diseases. One might, therefore, expect teacher and pupil attendance to be somewhat parallel. Pupil attendance falls off from the September high point to reach a low point in February, whereupon the trend is reversed through June. Outside temperature and student patterns are similar. What of teacher attendance? Does it, too, follow the temperature/pupil attendance curve?

The Sample

A sample of New York State Public school districts was tentatively selected for inclusion in the study. Districts were chosen to represent the four major heating degree zones, and rural, suburban, and city community types. The superintendent of each district was first contacted by telephone, and upon his agreement to participate, a letter of confirmation was sent. From an original sample of thirty-eight districts, fourteen supplied the necessary data (Table 1). About 7,000 teachers are included in the survey.

It quickly became apparent that a large proportion of the districts did not aggregate individual teacher attendance data into school building and districtwide attendance figures by day, week or month. A very few districts did have the desired information readily at hand, since they used it in teacher contract negotiations. Computerized teacher attendance record keeping was no assurance of aggregation of data.

Table 1. Cooperating Districts

District Name	Degree Zone	Community Type
Utica	8	City
Potsdam	8	City
Binghamton	7	City
Rochester	6	City
Newburgh	5	City
New York Mills	8	Suburb
Vestal	7	Suburb
South Colonie	6	Suburb
East Irondequoit	6	Suburb
Great Neck	5	Suburb
Brushton-Moira	8	Rural
Delhi	7	Rural
Pine Valley	6	Rural
Mattituck	5	Rural

The Data

Each district was asked to supply monthly totals of the number of days teachers were absent, the number of days teachers were expected to be present each month, and the total number of teaching staff for whom data were provided. Absences to be counted were those taken at the discretion of the teacher, such as: sick leave, personal leave days, and absence due to family illness or death. Maternity leave, sabbaticals and visitation days were not to be counted as absences.

Teachers were defined as those directly involved in the classroom. Teacher aides and special education instructors were to be included. Supervisory, support staff, and administrators were to be excluded.

Compilation of Data

Data pertaining to teacher absences were received in the project office in various forms. Some districts provided daily computer printouts of teacher absences divided into as many as nine categories, other districts had their clerks cull individual teacher attendance sheets to bring together the data by month, a few gave monthly ratios already compiled. Whatever the form of the report, the data were composed so they could be placed upon forms designed to expedite calculation of desired figures (Figure 1). For example, school districts usually provided the data that could be entered into columns 1 and 3 of the form (see Figure 1). Column 2 was calculated from column 1, column 4 from columns 2 and 3 and column 5 from column 4. After individual school district computations had been completed, school district ratios were combined to yield a total State pattern, community type patterns, and degree zone patterns.

TEACHER ABSENCES 1976-77

School District _____

Month	1 Teaching Days	2 Total Teaching Days	3 Total Absent	4 Ratio Absences	5 Attend. Ratio
Sept.					
Oct.					
Nov.					
Dec.					
Jan.					
Feb.					
Mar.					
April					
May					
June					
Totals					
Total Staff =					

Temperature Zone _____

Community Type _____

Figure 1. School District Compilation Form

Results

The statewide pattern showed teacher attendance to decrease to a low point in December (Figure 2). Thereafter, attendance fluctuated at a slightly higher percent in attendance. Contrary to the expectations of some superintendents, who felt that the poorest attendance would occur in June when the teachers would "take" their remaining leave, the June figure was higher than the May figure. The May figure was not as low as the December figure.

Attendance figures of teachers grouped by community types (Figure 3) showed the pattern of attendance of Rural teachers to be very similar to the student attendance curve. The City teacher pattern was most like the statewide pattern. This may have been because the large number of teachers forming this group affected the statewide pattern more than the other groups. The attendance pattern of Suburban teachers was generally lower than the other two categories. It reached a low point in May.

Of the Degree Zones groups, the 6000° group showed the least variation over the school year. The 7000° category fluctuated most widely going from its highest attendance in September to the lowest in June. The 5000° group, with a low point in February, most closely resembled student attendance.

Summary and Conclusions

Generally speaking, the teacher attendance pattern does not resemble that of the students. Though both show a decrease for the first three months, the similarity is lost from then to year end. Too, there is little similarity among the patterns of the degree zone and community type groups. Since teacher attendance seems to be so little related to time of year and to yearly temperature patterns, it would appear that school calendar changes would have little affect upon teacher attendance.

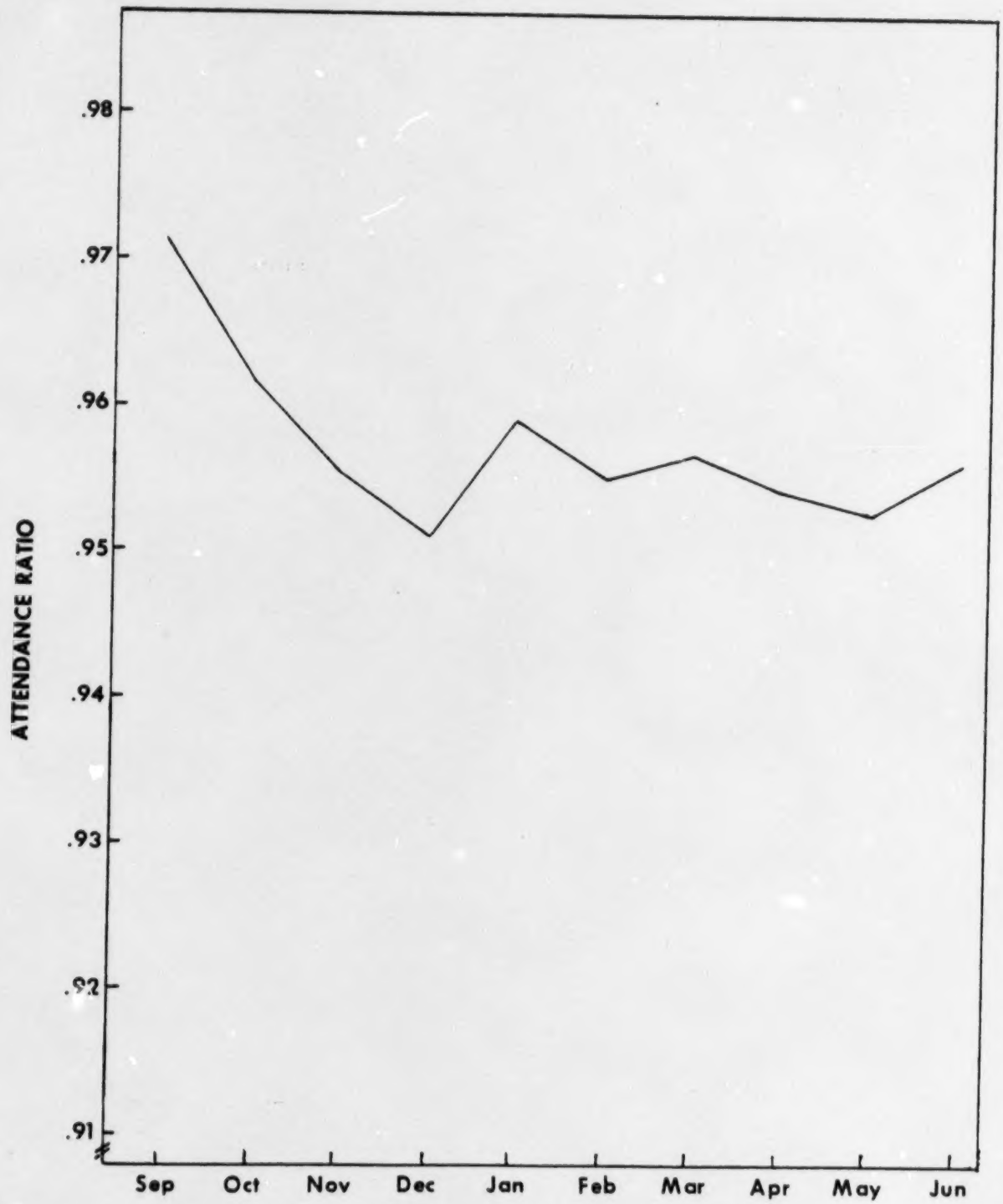

FIGURE 2. STATEWIDE TEACHER ATTENDANCE PATTERN

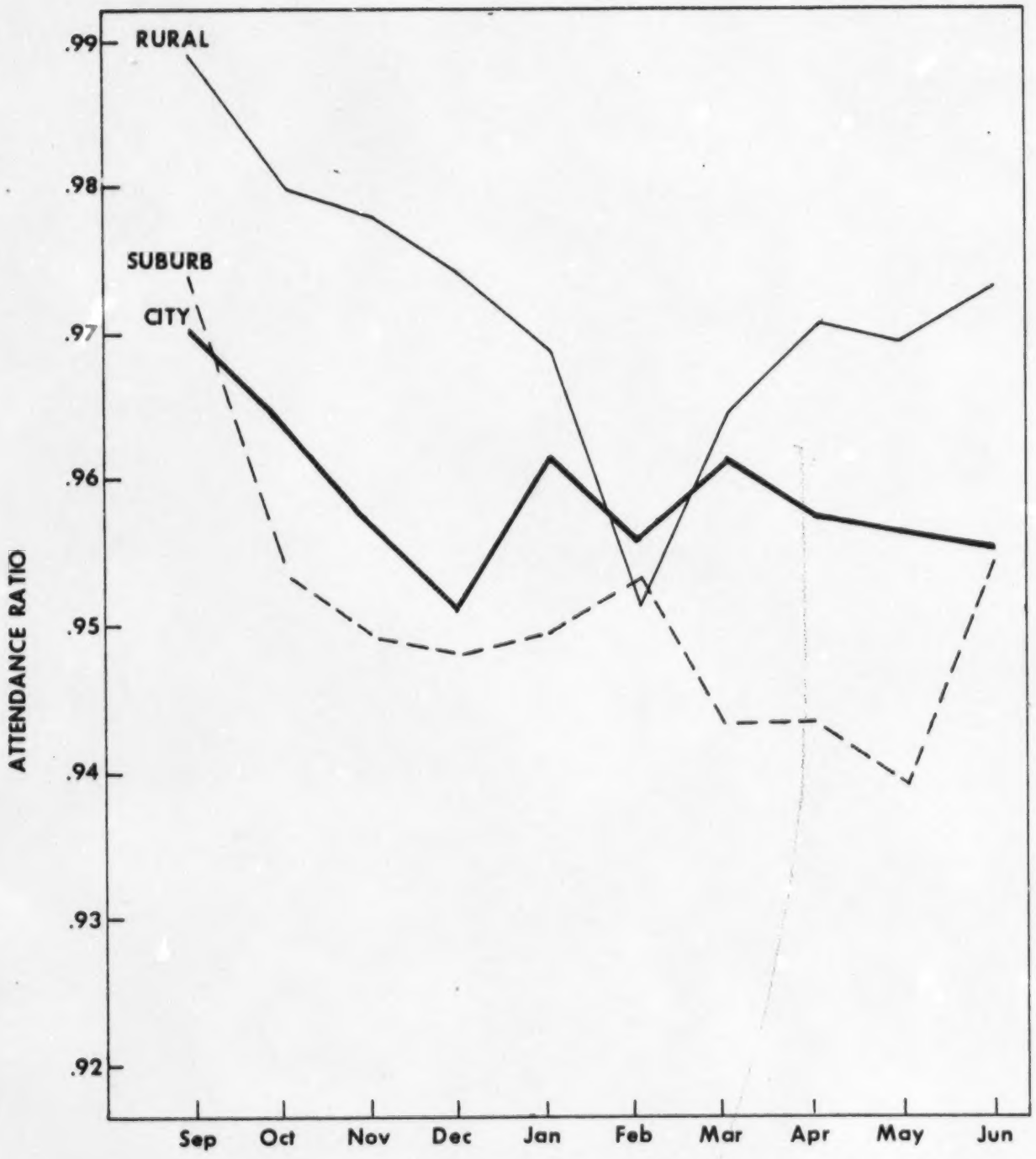

FIGURE 3. TEACHER ATTENDANCE PATTERNS BY COMMUNITY TYPE

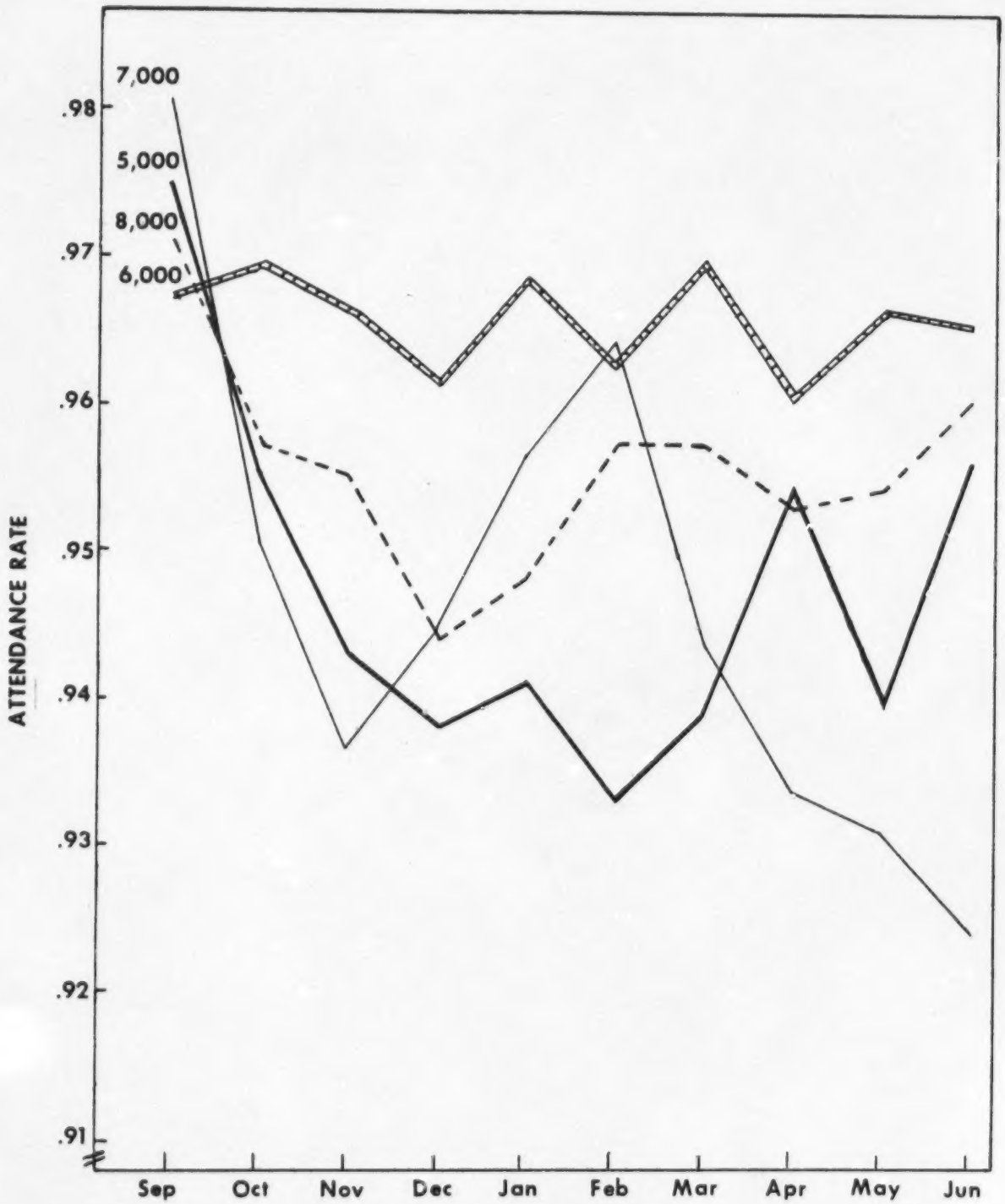

FIGURE 4. TEACHER ATTENDANCE PATTERNS BY DEGREE ZONE